

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

AU's INTERNATIONAL FAMILY ORIENTATION PROGRAM (IFOP)

PURPOSE

Provide information on the International Family Orientation Program

DISCUSSION

- Background
 - IFOP is a two-week, 4 hour per day program, 0800 to 1200 Hrs, conducted in the June/July time frame each year at the Maxwell Dependents School on Maxwell AFB.
 - The 2013 program was conducted from 24 June – 2 July (excluding weekends/holidays). More than 60 spouses and 200 children attended and they were supported by more than 65 volunteers.
- Purpose
 - Ease the newly arrived Air War College and Air Command and Staff College international military students'(IMS) dependents' transition into American culture, society and language with the overall intent of reducing the anxiety and culture shock of living in a "foreign" country
 - Provide IMS dependent children with a safe and fun learning environment that mirrors a local public/private school – thus helping prepare them for eventual integration into area schools
 - Introduce international dependent spouses to a diverse social network, familiarize them with the greater Montgomery area, and teach them how to "survive" in the United States
- Administration
 - IFOP is an AU program administered by the International Officer School (IOS) and is wholly volunteer supported. IOS personnel provide all organization, logistics, and administrative support to include but not limited to reserving activity venues, paying admission fees, arranging transportation, providing daily snacks, providing graduation certificates to all participants, etc.
 - Volunteer's school age children can participate in the daily program as long as the parent is present and working in a volunteer capacity

- Program Information

- IOS personnel divide dependents into a childrens group and a spouses group
- Spouses remain together as a large group
 - Focus on “survival” language and speaking skills, local foods and available grocery venues, shopping habits and procedures, store security, severe weather actions/warnings, local driving conditions and associated hazards, etc
 - Provide familiarization on all base support facilities as well as addressing clinic procedures, who to contact in emergency situations, and laws requiring use of seatbelt and child car seats
- Children are divided into school age and grade-level groupings--Pre-K to Seniors
 - Nursery and toddler care/playgroups provide interaction with other international/US children
 - Volunteer school age classroom instruction includes use of common words and phrases, local school classroom procedures, and direct interaction with US children at each level
 - Classroom volunteer-led activities are geared to provide a fun, low-threat environment to learn or improve language skills, adapt to a new culture, and make friends
 - The volunteer class leader of each age group will have access to previous years on-hand supplies available to them as well as a stipend of up to \$150 to purchase additional supplies to support classroom project activities
 - Out of classroom activities for school age children include: bowling, movies, swimming, roller skating, and a visit to the Montgomery zoo
 - IFOP will culminate with a childrens “graduation” exercise where each school age group usually perform a 5 min skit or song that they learned during classroom sessions

- Miscellaneous Information

- With a total participation usually close to 300 people annually 40 -50 volunteers are required to conduct a successful program

SUMMARY

IFOP is a two week program, wholly supported by volunteers, and is designed to ease the newly arrived international military students’(IMS) dependents’ transition into American culture, society and language with the overall intent of reducing the anxiety and culture shock of living in a “foreign” country